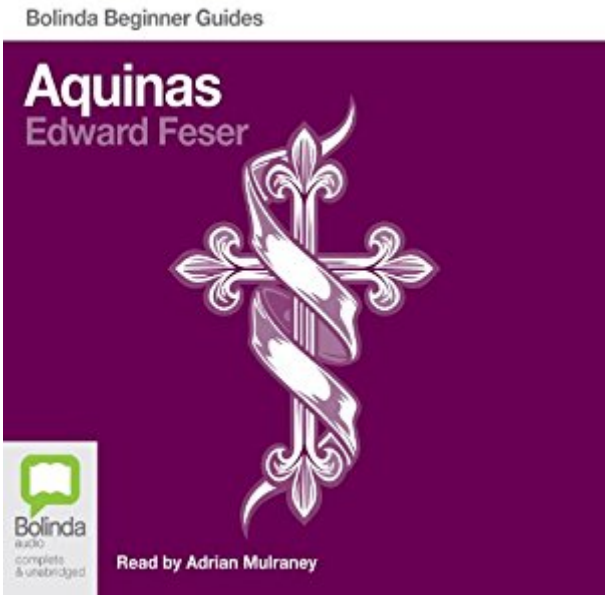
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Aquinas: Bolinda Beginner Guides



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Synopsis

One of the most influential philosophers and theologians in the history of Western thought, St. Thomas Aquinas established the foundations for much of modern philosophy of religion, and is famous for his arguments for the existence of God. In this cogent and multifaceted introduction to the great saint's work, Edward Feser argues that one cannot fully understand Aquinas' philosophy without his theology, and vice-versa. Covering his thoughts on the soul, natural law, metaphysics, and the interaction of faith and reason, this will prove an indispensable resource for students, experts, or the general reader.

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Customer Reviews

This is an excellent introduction to the thought of Aquinas (it deals with his philosophy - it is not a biography of his life and times, nor does it cover all the theology). It is very accessible to the non-expert, but is best suited for those with some background knowledge of philosophy. In about 200 well written pages, Feser both presents and advocates for Thomist positions through 4 chapters devoted respectively to metaphysics, natural theology, psychology, and ethics.I think Feser`s greatest success is in his arguments for a re-consideration of Aquinas' Aristotelian metaphysical ideas, especially with regard to causation, but also with regard to an ontology of potency and action, and hylomorphic (form/matter) dualism.My main criticism is that while Feser's assumed role as Aquinas' champion is usually a benefit to the reader, as Aquinas is presented in most sympathetic light, he is inclined to insist that all of Aquinas' ideas are equally meritorious. In some cases this

leads him to present arguments which seem to go beyond what would have occurred to Thomas himself.But, with plenty of references for further reading, Feser has given the reader a roadmap for further study to follow onto his fine introduction.

Feser is perhaps THE best Thomistic philosopher in the USA. His work is crisp and readable yet profoundly grounded in first principles and quite responsible to the subtleties of the issues. This is THE introduction to Aquinas that one should get if one seeks a college level yet readable text. I cannot recommend this highly enough.

A fantastic introduction to Thomism for those without training in philosophy. Feser's style is readable while remaining very precise and he has the terribly useful habit of reminding you what you need to remember about Aquinas' odd (to the modern) usages in context. As a neuroscientist I found his elucidation of the Thomist approach to the mind-body problem (i.e., it doesn't exist for the Thomist) fascinating.Really, a very meaty book that has given me a great deal to think about.

This is an amazing introduction to the teaching of Aquinas. Feser's main thesis is that most people do not understand Aquinas because they are beginning with different metaphysical assumptions than Aquinas. In other words, all of these bad caricatures of the five ways of Aquinas are based on fundamental misunderstandings and not looking at the metaphysical assumptions that Aquinas held to. Feser begins to remedy this problem by introducing us to Aquinas' view of the four causes (material formal, efficient, final) as well as his teaching on being and essence. Feser argues that the rejection of the four causes is not based on any sort of good reason, but an unhealthy skepticism. Once we understand Aquinas' metaphysics, we are in a position to look at his 5 ways or proofs for the existence of God.Feser notes that while most people quote Aquinas' 5 ways from his Summa, the Summa was meant as a beginners guide to theology. Hence the demonstrations for God's existence are not meant for skeptics but for those who already believe in God and need to organize their ideas about God's existence. Feser mentions that the Aqunas' full and thorough proofs for God's existence worked out in detail may be found in Aquinas' Summa Contra Gentiles. Feser then spends several pages on each of the five ways. It is quite interesting because I too, unfortunately, had bought into the modern mindset that Aquinas' 5 ways were just sort of old hat, similar to intelligent design, not too deep, and all more or less the same. Nothing could be further from eh truth. I was amazed at how careful and rigorous the proof from motion is when given in its full detail with all the necessray metaphysical background in place. This requires understanding of what

Aquinas meant by motion, potentiality, action, and several other concepts. It was rewarding to spend some time pondering this proof because I realized how shallow much of my metaphysics really is. Feser was also able to explain how Aquinas argued that even if the universe could have existed for an infinite amount of time, it would still require a first cause. This idea had always bothered me, but Feser gave an excellent illustration and the idea is now quite clear in my mind.In discussing the 5 ways, Feser mentions how the 5 ways are all different from each other. Many people will blow off the first 3 ways, claiming that they are basically the same. Yet Feser looks a wide range of Aquinas' writings on these ways and argues that he had different things in mind and different properties of God that the arguments would deduce. Feser also distinguishes between Aquinas' argument by design and Paley's argument from design. These are nothing alike and should not be confused, which is another common error. After the discussion of the five ways, Feser discusses the nature of man (psychology) and explains Aquinas' view, in particular, of the soul. Again, here is a place where many people do not know what Aquinas taught. Aquinas did not think of the soul as an invisible ether that permeates the body or as some other kind of invisible entity. Rather, the soul is the form of the body; that which animates the body. This can be summed up in Aquinas' theory of hylomorphism. Again, Aquinas' metaphysics are crucial to understanding this concept. One particularly attractive aspect of Aquinas' view of the human soul is that it does fall victim to the objection about "how does the soul (immaterial) interact with the body (material)?" often posed by skeptics. This question simply makes no sense on Aquinas' hylomporphic view.This book is amazing. It is short, but one can spend hours upon hours pondering it, rereading the same passages to take in all the information and understand the metaphysics of Aquinas. The method of Aquinas was sanctioned in the encyclical Humani Generis and thus Aquinas' teaching is well worth the time of any serious Catholic who wishes to be of one mind with the Church.

This book not only clearly elucidates Aquinas' central philosophical theses, it also demonstrates that Aquinas, and indeed Aristotle, are just as relevant to our modern world as they were in their own respective times.Beginning with Aquinas' view of reality in general, Feser provides brief but highly detailed and carefully crafted chapters that explain Aquinas' arguments for God's Existence, His divine attributes, the immortality and immateriality of the soul, and classical natural law (not to be confused with any modern version of new natural law theory). Moreover, Feser concisely critiques some of the more historically popular objections to Aquinas' arguments showing how they not only fail to forcefully counter Aquinas' claims but also how most of them do not even object to Aquinas on his own terms. In other words, most modern critics do not even properly understand what Aquinas is

actually saying, and a careful analysis of the arguments is usually enough to respond to many of the objections against him.This is a short and excellent introduction to the thought of the Angelic Doctor. I highly recommend it to all readers who are interested in philosophy and to those who think that Aquinas' philosophy is outmoded or that his arguments have long been conclusively refuted. Finally, to those who thought that Feser's previous book, The Last Superstition, was too polemical in nature, this book contains much of what is in TLS but with a much more "academic" tone.

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